



News and Information from State Services for the Blind

A division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

The Spectacle

-Dare to stand out

September 2019

Just for Fun

We share the following bit of humor with you as you begin a new school year, from ["30 Funny Back to School Jokes"](#)

1. Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?

Answer: At the bottom.

2. Why did the M&M go to school?

Answer: He wanted to be a Smartie

3. Why did the little boy eat his homework?

Answer: Because he didn't have a dog.

4. What kind of school do you go to if you're...

an ice cream man?

Answer: Sundae school.

a giant?

Answer: High school.

a surfer?

Answer: Boarding school.

King Arthur?

Answer: Knight school.

Upcoming and ongoing

SSB Services for Teens

The Transition Team at Minnesota State Services for the Blind connects students who are blind, low vision, and DeafBlind with the programs and services they need to be successful after high school graduation.

As students plan for their futures, we can be a valuable resource for programs, skills, technology, and access to print. We believe that students who receive opportunities to work and live independently while in school are more successful when they leave the educational setting. Our services are designed to build and integrate skills over students' tenure in high school, and we are committed to a proactive, creative approach with our students. For more information, please visit <https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/> and click on "For Teens."

School Year Programs for Teens

During the summer, many teens have been active in camps, work, and learning experiences. Both BLIND, Incorporated and the Duluth Center for Vision Loss offer programs during the school year that extend learning and skill-building opportunities for teens. Information about each program can be found online at www.blindinc.org and <https://www.lcfvl.org/>. Please contact your SSB counselor to participate in these programs. Additionally, Vision Loss Resources has a new program in the works. Stay tuned!

SSB Communication Center

A new school year brings many new things: clothes, friends, backpacks, teachers, and a new start. It also brings new books. The Communication Center is here to put your books into accessible formats that work for you. Custom audio, e-text, DAISY markup, and Braille—we can do it! The Communication Center is Minnesota's Accessible Reading Source - your source for accessible reading.

SSB Counselors Ask for Updated Information

With the new school year beginning, it would be helpful if you could provide us with updated information. It's the time of year that we double-check our records and make sure that we have the most current information about you. This helps us coordinate meetings with you, your family, your school, and your teachers. We might already have some of this information, but we're asking for it again just to be sure all information is up to date.

Student Information

- Student email (personal or school):
- Student phone:
- High school or transition school you are attending:
- Grade:
- Name AND contact information of your TBVI and/or special education teacher:

- Have you engaged in an assistive technology assessment with SSB? If so, what was the month/year of your last assessment?

Parent Information (required for students under the age of 18)

- Parent name:
- Parent email:
- Parent phone:

PACER Opportunities

PACER offers a number of learning opportunities for parents and families. Below are a few Back to School resources for parents. To learn more about PACER, visit <https://www.pacer.org/>

Paving the Way: Parent Tips for Supporting Success in High School and Beyond

High school can be both an exciting and overwhelming time for students and their parents. There are increased academic, social, and extracurricular expectations, as well as exciting opportunities for students to spread their wings. For students with disabilities, there can be a variety of additional concerns, such as creating an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP), deciding on courses of study, and addressing health care needs. PACER's guide, [Parent Tips for Supporting Success in High School and Beyond](#), shares ideas that can help start the school-year strong.

Back-to-School Apps for Transition-Age Youth

Many free and low-cost mobile apps are available to support transition-age youth with disabilities as they embark on their academic journey. With so many options, it is difficult to know where to begin. Explore possibilities using PACER's [Mobile Apps to Support Transition-Age Youth](#) and Understood.org's [8 Apps to Help Kids Manage Back-to-School Challenges](#).

ADA Q&A: Back to School

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not contain specific special education rules or requirements, it can definitely have an impact on education. Read PACER's [ADA Q&A: Back to School](#) to learn about protections afforded by the ADA for students, parents, and employees, as well as the responsibilities of schools to comply with the ADA.

Back to School Tips for Parents

By modeling confidence, creating structure, and getting to know new teachers, parents can help ease the transition back to school for their teen with a disability. Some other considerations include mental health at back-to-school time, brain development, and critical thinking. Read Child Mind Institute's [Back to School Tips for Parents](#) to learn more.

Back-to-School Webinar Series to Support Students with ADHD and LD

[ADDitude](#), a resource network for families and adults living with ADHD and related conditions, has released a [Back-to-School Webinar Series](#) that runs August 13th through October 16th with topics

such as executive functions, routines, homework strategies, and technology. Webinars are for individuals, parents, and teachers.

Blind Abilities Podcasts

Check out Blind Abilities on the web at www.BlindAbilities.com, and download the [Blind Abilities App](#) and follow the [Blind Abilities Community](#) and [Career Resources for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) groups on Facebook. An opportunity for all of us to learn, share and advise – we are all here for each other's success!

Fast Forward: Possibilities and Potential

On April 27, SSB hosted a Career Expo where students met with adults in a variety of jobs and careers. Here is a snapshot of three of the adults who volunteered to be there.

Therese Dahlberg Customer Service Representative, Ecolab

Therese has worked for over three years at Ecolab in the area of customer service. She has grown children and has not let vision loss stop her from living a full life. One of her biggest hobbies is playing darts with the Audio Dart League of Minneapolis.

Linda Jenkins-Fisher Human Resource Assistant, Department of Homeland Security/USCIS

Linda has an AAS degree in human resources. As a human resources assistant, she assists HR specialists with recruiting applicants and helping them become USCIS employees. A few of her responsibilities include responding to inquiries related to the federal hiring and recruitment process, providing clerical and technical administrative support, and onboarding new hires.

Walter Waranka Employment Specialist Lifetrack Resources

Earlier in his career, Walter founded the nonprofit agency CHANCE (Challenged People Having Abilities Needing Competitive Employment), which educates disabled people in job seeking skills and potential employers about the advantages of hiring disabled people. He has been an employment specialist at Lifetrack Resources for 22 years, assisting people with disabilities and recipients of welfare to find and keep employment.



Tech Tidbit

For iOS users, SSB highly recommends the combination of Voice Dream Reader and Voice Dream Scanner for any student. Voice Dream Reader can read Bookshare books, PDF files, Word documents, and other types of files, and from most cloud services like iCloud, Dropbox, and Google Drive. Adding Voice Dream Scanner allows a student to take a picture of a paper document, read it aloud, and save it for later right in Voice Dream Reader. Using both of these apps also makes otherwise inaccessible image PDF files accessible.

The **Noted** iOS app is a combination voice recorder and text note taking app. Users can record a class or meeting, and take notes at the same time. If the user is taking notes with a Bluetooth keyboard while recording, the text is synchronized with the audio. When reviewing their text notes later, the user can easily jump to the exact time of the recording. Recent updates have greatly improved VoiceOver accessibility as well.

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/noted/id1149425482>

Apple will be releasing iOS 13 sometime in September, and there are a lot of new and improved accessibility features students may want to explore. Users can finally enable a system-wide dark mode. VoiceOver has added more features, customization options, and better keyboard and Braille display support. Apple has also added an all new Voice Control feature, where people with mobility impairments can now largely control an iPhone with their voice. Also, remember that all of these accessibility features and options are now their own section within Settings. Just launch Settings and tap Accessibility.

Finally, Windows users will really want to try Microsoft's built-in accessibility features for blind and low vision users. Narrator and Magnifier have gotten a lot better, and there are also more mouse pointer size and color options to make the mouse easier to see. These features can all be found in the Ease of Access Center by pressing Windows Key + U, and don't require any downloads or purchases.

Building BRIDGES



As students navigate the world of high school and begin thinking about the future, we offer services and resources that provide a foundation for success. Each of the core areas of our **BRIDGE** framework highlights an essential component that teenagers need in order to succeed after high school:

- **B**asic Skills
- **R**ole Models
- **I**nitiative
- **D**iscovery
- **G**oal Setting
- **E**xperiences

In this same framework, we offer resources for parents and educators.

Basic Skills: "Laundry 101: Tips and Tricks from a Blindness Perspective"

<https://blindabilities.com/?s=laundry+101>

Role Models: "Reflections from a High School Graduate: Michelle's Story"

<http://www.familyconnect.org/info/browse-by-age/teenagers/teens-voices/reflections-from-a-high-school-graduate/1235>

Initiative: "A Step-By-Step Approach to Getting Involved"

<https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/fr/fr35/3/fr350313.htm>

Discovery: CAREERwise-pathways, clusters, interest inventories, and finding your future

<https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/careers/clusters.html>

Goal setting: Help students create SMART goals

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/smart-goal-setting-with-students-maurice-elias>

Experiences: “Looking for your first job? Many options don’t require experience”

<https://www.careeronestop.org/getmyfuture/employment/ideas-for-first-jobs.aspx>

Looking Ahead in High School

Thinking about what comes after high school is an important skill. The links below offer steps to take to prepare and plan for life after graduation.

[Freshman](#)

[Sophomore](#)

[Junior](#)

[Senior](#)

Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas you’d like to see featured in this newsletter. Please email

Sheila.Koenig@state.mn.us with any suggestions or brainstorm. 😊